



## News Release

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### **Governor to Convene Pandemic Influenza Planning Task Force**

SALT LAKE CITY – To enhance Utah’s pandemic influenza response plan, Governor Jon Huntsman today announced the creation of the *Governor’s Task Force for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness* to develop recommendations regarding pandemic influenza-related policy questions. The Task Force will bring together leaders from different parts of the community and areas of expertise including health care, business, elected officials, faith-based organizations, public safety and public health.

“Early preparation as a State, with all appropriate stakeholders, is the single most important thing we can do in anticipation of any pandemic flu outbreak,” said Governor Huntsman. “Proper planning will save lives, help maintain consistent operation of government and reduce overall disruption that would result from such an event.”

Task Force members have been charged with addressing important issues related to pandemic influenza and making recommendations on how public health, working in partnership with the community, can best respond to community needs. Key issues to be discussed by the Task Force include:

- Establishing an effective and credible mechanism for the difficult, life-and-death decisions that will need to be made during a pandemic
- Assessing the ability of the medical care system to provide care for the many people, who may become ill during a pandemic
- Identifying steps to assure that essential businesses, community services, and critical infrastructure can continue during a pandemic
- Preparing to provide support and care for individuals and families who will be confined by illness or to stop spread of disease
- Providing guidance on whether to purchase and how to use a state stockpile of antiviral medications
- Providing guidance on use of limited supplies of vaccine

The Task Force will convene in a series of meetings over the next six months. Dr. David Sundwall, executive director, UDOH and Dr. James Mason, former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will serve as co-chairs of the Task Force.

“I’m pleased to be able to work with Dr. Mason and the members of the Task Force under the direction of Governor Huntsman,” said Dr. Sundwall. “Community participation is critical to this process and I thank the committee members for their commitment and involvement in the task force.”

The first Task Force meeting will be held on Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup> at the Governor’s Mansion. This orientation meeting will provide task force members with an overview of pandemic influenza and a preview of key policy issues that will impact the community in a pandemic. Various subject experts will be invited to attend the task force meetings according to the topic being discussed.

The UDOH, working in partnership with other state agencies and Utah’s 12 local health departments, are preparing for an influenza pandemic. The UDOH released the Utah Pandemic Influenza Response Plan in November 2005 and Public health agencies have made available a variety of planning resources for families, communities, businesses, schools and faith-based organizations. The response plan and planning resources can be found online at [www.pandemicflu.utah.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.utah.gov).

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*